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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to indicate priorities for qualitatively-based research in child care. Three main foci for research are indicated. Researchers should examine the multi-faceted cultural and social experiences of the children in programs, investigate the social system in which adults form formal and informal child care arrangements, and study the political and economic influences on all types of child care. The complex ways in which programs work to bring about particular outcomes and how children acquire the culture of centers have not been sufficiently studied. Specific attention should be given to the adjustments children must make in the transition from home to center care. Ethnographic and behavioral approaches can be used to study the child's behavior within the context of the social system of the center. Case studies eliciting the social and political context and atmosphere in which centers operate are needed. Within-program conflicts and resolutions concerning matters such as education, race, value orientations and minority employment, etc., should also receive attention. Anthropologists may effectively assist center participants in conducting in-house research. Appropriately fashioned research and analysis needs to be done so that policy discussions become more clearly based on underlying political and ideological realities. Anthropologists may clarify dimensions of ethical concerns related to disputes over home versus center care. Twelve pages of bibliographic citations are included. (Author/RH)

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Necessary Directions for Anthropological

Research on Child-care in the United States

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Child-care in the United States has become a topic of national concern.

There is little agreement (and clarity) over what constitutes adequate or superior child-care and who should be the responsible agents for affecting it. Comparisons are made to other countries.¹ American child-care arrangements, both informal and formal, are seen as "wanting" by many groups. Other groups argue that the very idea of care outside the home by agents other than the mother is a disgrace. In addition, there has been belated recognition that the changed role of women in America has changed what is traditionally meant by "child-care", in this case, child-raising.

Child-care, anthropologically speaking, can be understood as the series of arrangements for the caring of children which derive from family lifestyles and external factors such as the economy and the nature of regulation in the larger society. These arrangements are likely to affect the experience, if not the development, of the child. Anthropologists using this perspective have much to contribute to the debate over types of child-care in this country. This paper is an exploration both for anthropologists and non-anthropologists of research priorities in child-care; it is put into a loose framework of relevant theory so that different people can communicate with each other in areas where they do not share the same vocabulary and perspective.²

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Much of the material contained in the paper is a consequence of a special conference held by Committee 1, Schools and Culture, of the Council on Anthropology and Education, held at the American Anthropological Association's 1977 Convention in Houston. Present at the sessions were anthropologists, psychologists, federal and state agency officials, early childhood researchers, policy makers, child-care professionals, and parents. The conferees were invited to discuss informally with anthropologists their priorities for research. Taping expenses were, in part, under-written by the Council on Anthropology and Education, to whom much thanks is owed. Additional material contained within the article has been gathered by interviews and observation; the sources, where possible, are noted.

In brief, the first research need anthropologists can address is to elicit the patterns of activity in each child-care arrangement in terms of the way in which children experience them. The second is to understand the diversity of child-care arrangements--how they arise and affect the families and staff who are active in them. The third is to ascertain the institutional arrangements which influence each type of child-care arrangement. The last is to see the debate over child-care in larger symbolic and political terms. The discussion will address each of these points in turns.

Central to this discussion will be the assumption basic to all anthropological analyses of child-rearing, that any child-care arrangement is one aspect of child-rearing in a society. It has meaning to the child participating within it, whatever its long range-effects. It is

dependent upon family life-styles and constitutes one aspect of defining the role of the family. Lastly, any child-care arrangement depends on larger social institutions as well as the economy, and, to varying extents, affects them in turn. Specific to the United States, as contrasted with Communist and Socialist countries, is the diversity of child-care arrangements, the fact that the state has not as yet mandated child-care, and the changing nature of the American nuclear family and the role of women (cf. Kenniston 1977). From the "basic" assumption noted above, it becomes clear that child-care must be seen as a redefinition of child-rearing for large sectors of society (cf. Joffe 1977).

A Preliminary Discussion of Typology:

When people discuss child-care, they are referring to a variety of formal and informal arrangements for the care of the child outside of the sole participation of the child's real or legal parents. Joffe has summarized well the different types of formal child-care arrangements, one in which the child is cared for in "official" designated spaces (1977.) Moreover, she has specified that the very terminology be in terms of child-care rather than day-care or any other term, to avoid the stigma attached to day-care in this country (1977.) Her discussion does not include, however, the less formal arrangements at the time, nor the newer proposals about child-care arrangements within the home. One arrangement, for example, suggests a voucher system for respite workers within the home, even payment to mothers (or fathers!) within the home (cf. Levine 1976.)

The discussion of different types of child-care arrangements is, in fact, a discussion of different roles for the family. Moreover, to the extent that the state is considered a part of the funding and regulatory process of this definition, it is a question of different roles for the state in the family process. Since both are in the process of changing their respective definitions, a typology of child-care which focuses exclusively on one or another is misleading for several reasons.

First, the discussion becomes highly politicized without making explicit the fact that it is politicized. Is in-home respite care "child-care" or is it state-funded "baby-sitting" (cf. Sale 1971)? Does

providing child-care in the afternoons at a center for middle-class nuclear families so that the woman/man/parent can attend enrichment classes (see Joffe, 1977) constitute state subsidy and a contribution to the destruction of family life? Obviously, the issue is clouded-- but clouded because it masks a political debate over priorities. Each area, each set of participants, define what can be considered as "child-care" (as in, for example, the Senate Sub-Committee on Child-care Hearings in San Francisco, November 1977.)

Second, the discussion then does not key into other areas of theory so that the varieties of academic disciplines which can concern themselves with such questions can address the problem. One lengthy example should suffice. Joffe's study focuses on the Early Childhood Education program in Berkeley, California. The city-funded centers served children whose parents were subsidized by Title XX monies funded through the State government as well as parents who paid for child-care. The staff was paid. Parents were expected to help out in a variety of capacities. The lower-income parents were the subsidized ones; most of these were black. They saw the center as a service provided for them. The children could be taught to achieve while the parents worked. The middle-income parents paid for services; most were white. They saw the center as a family program for children and themselves. The children should be helped to express themselves while the parents grew in terms of their involvement with the center.

For the lower-income parents, at least at the start, the center was a formal government institution which provided direct service.

They did not view their participation as equivalent to membership. The middle-income parents saw the center more as a voluntary association whose purpose was mutual benefit--for children, parents, and staff. Participation was almost equivalent to membership. Both categories of parents used the same center but in different ways. Moreover, they were receptive to differing amounts of intervention in family life by staff.

Even within a formal child-care institution then, it is not clear that a uniform definition can be applied to child-care. The role of the parents, the role of the staff, the translated expectations onto children and program, vary and change over time; to the extent that agencies outside the arrangement intervene, the situation becomes more complex. The child experiences the program, the expectations of adults, and the changes. From a variety of theoretical perspectives in psychology, it would be desirable to have a typology of child-care that allows a long-range assessment of the different types of arrangement each child experiences over time, a typology that is sensitive to the subtle expectations of culture that Ogbu (1978) profoundly raises.

At this point in the anthropological study of child-care arrangements in this country, it is impossible to develop such a typology for several reasons. Research needs to be done on the variety of formal and informal arrangements that different categories of people use over time, keyed to certain kinds of questions--what does the child experience? What are the parents' expectations? The care-givers'? Other siblings? (cf. Reisman 1977:57) What are the circumstances that promote use of

informal vs. formal arrangements? Joffe suggests that black, low-income parents would prefer to have kin informally take care of children; white, middle-income parents would prefer centers. In part, the blacks had available family to attend to the child, while the whites did not. But there were significant value differences influencing the choice as well; blacks "forced" into government-provided day-care because of economics wanted cognitive-enrichment programs. Whites wanted humanistically-based growth programs. The Abt child-care studies subsume and do not integrate these kinds of concerns; yet such concerns are vital to understanding the experience of the child.

Joffe has clearly shown that center involvement is important to adult development, both parental and staff. Adults use the center for peer group support, counseling, and occasional financial help. For many, it constitutes a good part of their social life, particularly in industrial, university, and cooperative day-care. A typology of formal centers sensitive to multiple use by adults is necessary so as to understand changes in adult life-styles as well as the changing nature of the family and its acceptance of outside intervention.

A typology of informal arrangements is necessary as well, from sibling care to babysitting to cooperative day-care to neighbors watching the child. (cf. Rose 1976; Peters 1976.) These arrangements arise from family life-styles, to be sure. They too come into contact with the state as do formal centers. The neighbor who refuses to report neglect and abuse of a "latchkey" child may be culpable under

California law. How does that legal obligation affect informal networks within a neighborhood as well as the social climate of an area?

In the ensuing discussion, unless otherwise noted, informal and formal child-care arrangements will be grouped together under the term "child-care." Certain types of child-care will be addressed when appropriate. The larger issue of typology and definition must await further research sensitive to the questions above and must include more data than given by the "case studies" provided by the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) or other studies.

The Experience of the Child

Central to the debate over what constitutes quality child-care is the concern over the child's experience within the child-care arrangement. On the one hand, it is thought desirable that the arrangement provide for the normal development of the child. On the other hand, it is thought equally desirable that the arrangement promote the cultural development of the child. In the first instance, staff and facilities are to be arranged in such ways that the child performs at his/her own age-level appropriate behavior. For the second, clearly defined cultural values are to be transmitted to the child through appropriate adult behavior, suitably organized individual and peer group activity, and environments designed to reflect cultural ideals. The child-care arrangement should be a place where the child discovers, learns, and internalizes the most ideal values of the larger society: "The average parents want essentially three things for their child: (a) to turn out sane, (b) heterosexual, and (c) to be gainfully employed. Parents also expect their child to be a competent achiever and to think for himself" (Holloman et al 1977, #3: 10.) Similarly: "The higher the quality of space in a center, the more likely were teachers to...teach consideration for the rights and feelings of self and others" (Kritchevsky and Prescott 1969: 5; cf. Bergstrom and Morgan 1975.)

The testing procedures developed to find out whether child-care arrangements meet these goals show a similar concern. The National

Day Care Study, for example, lists some of the following variables being tested for: Dependency; Cooperation/Compliance; Apathy/Withdrawal; Self-Control; Social and Emotional Harm; and Task Persistence (Travers, Coelen and Roupp 1977: 36 et seq.) The justification for these variables being selected is a two-fold contention; they relate to "children's later social adjustment and cognitive achievements... and [dependency] has a long research history in developmental psychology (*ibid*: 47.)" The NDCH study did not focus on all aspects of "dependency": "Dependency referred to the child's tendency to seek comfort and assistance from adults. Other dependent behaviors, such as seeking praise and attention, were not included. (*ibid*: 49.)" Other studies followed much the same general format, albeit less complete (see, for example, NAEYC 1972 v. 2:42.) At this point, the ways in which program works to bring about these "outcomes" is not discussed; Wolfensberger and Glenn 1974) evaluation procedures such as PASS will be analyzed below.

Fundamental both to organization of centers and evaluation of children's experience is the notion that cultural values can be designed into the social and physical setting in such a way that they complement developmentality of children. From a variety of perspectives in anthropology, this proposition needs to be questioned. The assumption is one that presupposes a somewhat unitary view of what constitutes culture. There are problems in this assumption as well as insufficient data on the child's view of culture. Each will be examined in turn.

The first problem in the assumption is that culture is not as unitary as is often viewed by non-anthropologists. Nor is it as clear and transmittable as those designing child-care arrangements would suggest. First of all, even ideal culture is contradictory (see Worsley 1967; Evans-Pritchard 1962.) Values and ideals are in conflict and do not mesh with each other. Furthermore, not all situations are "covered" by cultural prescriptions of appropriate behavior, and behavior in one area does not often constitute a model for another situation. Culturally-acceptable ideal behavior in the United States has undergone a series of transformations even in thirty years; the questioning that Riesman noted as characteristic among American youth in his 1969 Preface to The Lonely Crowd (1977: xiv-xv), a change from 1961 and 1949, is not characteristic of American youth in 1978.

The child-care arrangement simply cannot transmit culture to children. At best, it may be socializing children into one set of norms, norms which have contradictory messages within them that the child has to integrate for him or herself. Furthermore, (and the issue of "real" culture or behavior will be addressed shortly,) the norms are not agreed upon by all as constituting the core values that should be transmitted: Various ethnic groups, religious groups, and groups whose parents' sexual preference differs from the culturally "acceptable" have different values they want to see reflected in any child-care arrangement (see, for example, Comer and Poussaint 1976.) As Joffe points out, black parents were less concerned about free

expression than were white parents in a child-care center in Berkeley (1977.)

The situation becomes more complicated when the child is expected to integrate the diverse messages of ideal and real culture. In the first case, the child is expected to assimilate a contradictory and fragmentary set of values, one whose agents are strongly trying to model their own behavior to provide (see, for example, Holloman 1977, #5 and Trainers Manual.) In the second case, the child must assimilate the "noise" of staff in trying to effectuate those norms as well as the different expectations of parents and staff about those norms. One national child-care researcher privately said: "I think it's good that kids get different messages. It prepares them for the world." However true this is, it is certainly not the set of expectations that parents and staff bring into the child-care arrangement.

One example should suffice. Joffe recounts a program of enrichment in the Berkeley ECE (Early Childhood Education) projects. At one point, the multi-ethnic group was taken to a local race track on a field trip. She notes that the white children and staff thought of this as a field trip; many black children (and black staff?) did not; it was customary for the children to accompany their fathers to the track. It was beyond the intention of her study to pursue this incident, yet it raises an important research (and philosophical) question: what parts of any experience does a child choose to assimilate--and in whose terms? The point becomes crucial when the question is development of autonomy: groups vary in their definition of autonomy as well

as their desire to promote it for one sex as against another.

Anyone who has been active in a multi-ethnic day-care center experiences conflict among the parents and between parents and staff over what is appropriate for the children to learn (cf. Joffe 1977.) The child experiences that conflict, fragmentation, and discontinuity. Research tools sensitive to eliciting what children understand fragmentation to mean, (cf. Flapan 1968; Goodman 1964) not just what they feel (adjustment difficulties, transition, conflict), must be used. As Dr. Theodore Schwartz (UCSD) said in his speech at the AAA meetings in 1977, 'we have very little understanding of what children know of their culture--in any society.' Then, more careful assessments of the short-and-long range effects of the arrangement on the child can be ascertained.

The danger is that staff and parental notions of cultural transmission, with their unitary quality, are thought to be equivalent to what the children learn--or fail to learn. The emphasis is wrongly put on the child's ability or willingness to learn appropriate behavior. It is the cultural packages that diverse care-givers transmit, along with their noise, from which children may draw appropriate lessons. Recognizing that, it becomes clearer why some children of different ethnic groups still "succeed" more than others: they are picking up the very subtle cues of a society which appears to be based on caste (Ogbu 1978.) Culture is complex, subtle, and contradictory. Anthropologists should research the diverse cultural messages children experience in any arrangement. (cf. Borman 1978; Goetz 1978;

La Pelle and Rust 1973) Child-care givers should acknowledge a more refined notion of cultural transmission in the design of their programs.

Transition

Children going to the caregiver's home or facility experience a variety of changes and adjustments. Parents and staff, as well as other children, must cope with these changes and provide some ways for the child to adjust. Psychologists differ as to the desirability of these changes and the extent and nature of the adjustment that children must make (see, for example, Kearsley et al 1975; Eisenberg 1976; Ragozin 1976.) Anthropological research can help to refocus some of the considerations in this discussion by focusing on the symbolic experience of the transitions the child undergoes at the time and make some inferences about later connections. These points, and some suggested methodology, will be suggested below.

Anthropologists have rarely concerned themselves with the experience of the child in different cultures, and, for these purposes, the preschool age child. Previous research has largely been on the adult world's attempt to socialize the child, and thus on child-rearing patterns (eg. Mayer 1970.) Recently, there has been a recognition that the child's experience of the world is a necessary research objective, for it allows a more fluid understanding of the acquisition of culture and of behavior within small groups. Research with younger children, while difficult to achieve because of their lack of verbal skills (cf. Stern and Cohen 1958) is still possible (cf. Goodman 1964; Axline 1974.) An adult who chooses to interact with the child in a school play, or home situation can elicit valuable data if play-type

research methods--dolls, drawing, random conversations, socio-grammic analysis, etc., are followed.

There are several research methods in anthropology that would be most appropriate to eliciting the symbolic notion of transitioning. The first would be careful observation of children in a variety of different centers. When children are capable of being interviewed or given play-type projective tests, such as doll, figure, or picture games (age 3 plus), the data gained can complement the observation. Another useful tool is to work backwards with the parents and staff who attend the child, to elicit from them their observations on the transitions they face with each and all children. When the child is seen to be part of a series of transitions--getting up in the morning, going on the journey, entering the center/home, going through activities, the carry-over between each step provides a large-scale picture of the changes the child undergoes. The reverse sequence back home is equally true. Each will be discussed below, with examples.

The detailed observation on the child should focus on affect and specific overt behavior, such as playfulness, resistance, etc., taken at different points in time in any day and over a long period of time. Preliminary observation of one center shows that the toddlers there "know" when a parent is at home even after they are dropped off. Regardless of sex or race, those children who know that one parent is home rather than working show a calmer adjustment to being left than the others. Further, observation of the children shows that those children with all parents working are either overly active or depressed

and fretful. Staff in this center have noted this phenomenon as well and have tried to "compensate" for it, but with little success. Kearsley (et al 1975) take the opposite point of view.

Children who come in cheery or fretful way, all things being equal, maintain much of that posture throughout their day and on their return journey home. Caregivers working in a home or facility deal with the sum consequences of all the children's moods and must cope and adjust their own behavior. Some of the components of that adjustment, plus the child's experience of it, will be discussed shortly and in other sections.

Parents are expected to deal with the child's reading of events and his or her adjustment to them. One advisory group notes, in advising parents just starting their child in a center: "A place away from home is not home; it is a new place to learn and grow...He or she also has a responsibility to participate and make the most of the experience (Auerbach and Freedman 1976:60.)" Another set of prescriptions for parents is: "What makes a good program? Good people...Good people are more interested in helping children gain controls than for punishing them for things they did because of undeveloped controls (Comer and Poussant 1976: 109-10.)" The symbolism the child can develop will be markedly different if parents follow these different prescriptions, both of which are put into the framework of psychological, rather than cultural (normative prescriptive, i.e., ideal behavior) terms.

Thus, research should elicit from parents the expectations each component of the transitioning process, including the center experience.

It may be, as preliminary research by this researcher suggests, that the time before the parent enrolls the child as well as the daily journey to and from the center or home is a time for communicating and redefining (culturally) appropriate goals--and transmitting that dialogue to staff and other parents and caregivers. Further, once the child is given that message, the child's daily behavior in terms of activities can be observed to see to what extent behavior follows prescription. If children can be interviewed, so much the better.

It should be clear from the above suggestions that prescriptive behavior of the type given parents above is likely to be very much geared towards children going into formal child-care arrangements, and particularly ones in which behavior of children is expected to be judged and/or developed. It is difficult to find appropriate canons of "correct" advice, for parents to give children when the parent is forced to pick any available kind of child care: "Again, we believe it is best not to send a child to nursery or day care until after three years, and even then on a part-time basis. But what you must do, you must do. Do your best to find a good program and send your child without feeling that you are not being a good parent (Gomer and Poussant 1976: 109.)" The parent is then told that "a good nursery experience paves the way for smooth entry to school, (ibid; 109.)" For example, a woman may find a neighbor who can caretake her child while she is working on a swing shift. She may choose her for many reasons, one of which is that she is conveniently accessible and reasonable, and secondarily able to deal with cognitive dimensions of that

child's learning experience. The mixed message is not easily resolved.

Complementing the child's multifaceted experience of the different stages of journey between home and center is the child's experience within the center. Ethnographic approaches, that is, seeing the care-giving facility as a social system with its own territory, resources, membership, norms, and relationships to external groups, are particularly useful here. They also allow data collected on child-care to be keyed into other areas of research on child-care, as will be explored in other sections.

The researcher can observe and, as suggested above, participate in the facility in order to elicit data on children without substantiality distorting his or her information (cf. Zimmer 1976; Lofland 1976.) Ethnographic research has been done on kindergarteners (eg. Goetz 1978; Borman 1978) and with some modifications, similar research can be done on pre-schoolers (cf. LaBelle and Rust 1973; Goodman 1964.) The researcher can focus more on observable behavior, less on interviewing, patiently await random comments, and use his/her and staff's handling of transitions between activities to build up composite pictures of experiences. Furthermore, an ethnographic approach allows the researcher to see that the organization of activities, as well as the physical space, are cultural frameworks transmitted to the child which the child then has the option of assimilating. This is a point thought to transcend culture by many people in child-care; it is, in fact, as prescriptive as anything else: "Therefore, providing for color changes can satisfy both children's and teachers' need for color variation and give a

high degree of stimulation to the environment (Bartholomew et al., 1973: no page reference.)" The child is sensitized to see color like this and may experience dissonance within his or her home environment if color is used differently. When color marks off space, e.g. 'stations' delineated by color-coded carpeting, the child is potentially developing a color-coded map of social interaction. Similar examples can be found in other contexts.

Behavioral observation can elicit what ways in which children assimilate these norms and the ways in which they develop ones of their own, geared to the social system of the facility. In one southern permissive, non-sexist child-care center, the four-year old girls had marked off the doll section as theirs, the boys, the inside jungle gym. The staff was not able to break this sex-based territoriality, despite repeated efforts. It would be very interesting to ascertain what normative, developmental images the children acquired, and what they gained or learned about staff's interactions on this point (cf. Flapan 1968.)

The situation becomes even more clouded in terms of language development when parents and staff use language differently and children are expected to adjust to those differences. When language is coupled with cultural prescriptions, the child may be more confused. In one center staff operated by gays on the West Coast, it took a long time before parents and staff were able to understand each other even though both groups spoke English, and an even longer time before they managed to reduce some of their conflicts about non-sexist vs. sex-based learning.

Understanding what the transition means to the child to and from the center allows a richer picture to develop about the life of the child and its acquisition of diverse cultural messages. This point will be explored below. Child-care professionals often place too much emphasis on the center in terms of adjustment, remediation, or introduction of children into the adult world and then put even more emphasis on ideal behavior, both for children and parents. Children experience the whole process and the discordancies and the imperfections. It may be that adjustment not only to different adult personalities is necessary; it may be that discordancies are necessary as well--only if they are looked at in terms of desirable adult behavior and its "realistic" basis in a changing economy. It is when policy is made on the assumption that the program designed must work for the best interests of the child, without reference to later adult behavior in the larger economy and society, that the propositions become reflective of personal valuation and not-"scientifically" based.

What is best for children is still very debatable (see Kenniston 1977; Clarke-Stewart 1977; Zimilies 1977; also Kenniston in Senn 1977: 115-6.) As elsewhere, too often the onus is put on early experiences of children when the real changes that can "remedy" and "express" adequate concern with these issues are in the adult economic and social world. The anthropologist can contribute significantly to this understanding by focusing on socialization and its relation to ideal and real adult behavior.

Political Ecology of Child-care

Much of the previous research by psychologists and social workers concerning child-care issues is addressed to the policy implications of child behavior at different ages and in different contexts (see Clark-Stewart 1977; Kagan 1976.) It was suggested earlier, by over-stressing the unitary dimensions of culture and by not recognizing both cultural and social nuances, the policy implications of such research are at best weak because the complex learning which takes place within cultural and social variability is ignored or not seen as part of a tracking system for the larger society (cf. Ogbu 1978.)

One way out of this dilemma is to refocus research on different types of child-care arrangements more holistically. Any child-care arrangement is an outgrowth of different social, political, and economic factors, whether it is a formal or informal arrangement. Previous and current research has too narrowly focused on the parents' decision on choice and change, and not enough on the structural elements which underlie that decision. It is for this reason that Clarke-Stewart (1977) and Zimilies (1977) have asked others concerned with this problem to engage in research, particularly political scientists and sociologists. What will follow is a suggestion for holistic research and some cautions about its nature.

The first "caution" about child-care research, in fact, the hardest "caution", is to divest it of some of its policy implications (also Zimilies 1977.) This is particularly difficult since strong

emotional issues are involved as well as strong political and economic interests. Realistically speaking, what constitutes quality child-care varies in terms of the professional group advocating its particular formula or requisite set of experiences. One participant at the anthropological child-care conference, for example, took pointed issue with the "conventional wisdom" inherent in the New York Study on child-care--that small group and family home situations are the best care. Active in larger child care centers, that person contended that properly-run large centers provide as good a program as smaller ones. Further, that person argued that preliminary research supported this view. This "caution" will be explored more fully in the section on symbolic conflict in the area of child-care, below.

Informal child-care arrangements should be studied more extensively than they have in the past, and should be more central to studies on child-rearing (Weisner and Gallimore 1977.) Previous studies by anthropologists have rarely focused on the non-familial caring arrangements for children in different populations. This has been particularly true of low-income people (cf. Rose 1976; Peters 1976,) and particular lifestyle groups. More studies on baby-sitters, coop care arrangements, improvised child-care at family events and meetings, as well as "dropping off the child", (cf. Kornfein and Weisner 1977) should be undertaken--along with an analysis of the parents' reasons, characteristics, and resources for using these arrangements.

For formal child-care arrangements, the approach that should be followed is somewhat different. First of all, the child-care arrangement

should be recognized as a corporate group occupying a particular space and set of resources. This orientation, basic to social anthropology, allows any study on child-care to be placed in a range of perspectives. Each of these will be discussed below. Moreover, it recognizes that the child is one of several users of the center, and that the arrangements of the center, as well as its general atmosphere, are a consequence of program design as well as program response to internal and external sources. In simple terms, the child-care center is no different from any other small group and the adjustments which staff, parents, and others must make are communicated to the child as much as the formal program. To the extent that atmosphere is set up within a center, the child may internalize it--or at least deal with it.

Joffe's study offers a strong beginning in this direction (1977.) She clearly recognizes that the child-care center is a place where children receive the consequences of staff/parent politics and interaction. Importantly, she has traced out some of the formal factors, including types of funding for each child, that condition politics and interaction. She also ascertained the ways in which city politics as a whole affected center operations.

It was beyond the scope of her study to do more than touch other kinds of formal factors such as the nature of neighborhood cohesion in more depth, as Art Emlen of Portland State University is doing, the other kinds of political activities of the neighborhood and the ways in which different urban and county departments dealt with staff and administrators. These questions need to be researched in depth, because

they affect the atmosphere of the center. Several examples should suffice. In one mid-western city, officials from different departments reluctantly agreed that they selectively enforced health and safety regulations, largely for political and economic, not health reasons. In one California county, some officials did no enforcement at all, even though there were gross violations in many centers. In a third large Southern city, enforcement of health regulations occurred irregularly.

The different types of enforcement does condition the atmosphere. In the first case, center staff were primarily concerned with their political orientation to the city and child-care became a secondary concern. They became more involved in center life to make sure programs were funded. In the second case, staff did exactly what they wanted. In one related center in the mid-west, a center in which child abuse was reported was allowed to continue operating, because there was neither enforcement personnel nor an alternative center available. In the third case, staff and parents were kept busy trying to outguess the health inspectors every few months and gave little time to other kinds of involvement.

The examples differ, but they arise from the same set of conditions: Formal centers respond quite often to the policies and pressures of government, both administrative and financial. Program is affected, atmosphere is changed, and children may experience the world differently. Yet little of the research on a comparative basis includes these kinds of considerations, as in the various National Day Care Studies, and

OE Case Studies. They focus on internal dimensions of the program, when what ethnographic research suggests is the complexity of inter-sitential factors and their affects on any group (cf. Wolf 1968, et al.)

Studying child-care centers from ethnographic perspectives, that is, in case study terms eliciting the social and political context in which they operate and the atmosphere they create, is a necessary complement to the research noted above, a point made by one member of a national research team (cf. Zimilies on evaluation 1977.) Comparable studies should focus on different populations, the neighborhoods and structures which serve them, the internal dynamics of the groups as groups (not merely as service providers for children), the ways each center relates to government--elected, administrative, party, and other informal political bodies, such as child-care switchboards, as well as to non-political service providers--child abuse, alcoholism, health and so on.

Using the center as the basis of analysis, further studies should be done on the market different types of child-care arrangements serve. Informally, and this is something not often dealt with in various large child-care studies, cities vary considerably in the markets for different types of care. Miami, for example, seems to be extremely innovative in formal twenty-four hour child care from one month upwards. Houston seems to be the leader in franchised day-care. The Bay Area and Boston seem to be innovative in terms of alternative, middle-class child care arrangements. Obviously, ideological, political, economic, and structural factors have made a difference in terms of the overall pattern of formal child-care provisioning.

Child-care research can be separated from policy-oriented research about what is overwhelmingly "best" for the child; it can recognize that children experience atmospheres created by adults in the child-care situation. Researchers can then ascertain what happens to adults who are providing the service. What may be best for the child may be, to an extent, what is best for different categories of adults. To the extent that larger factors determine the working conditions for adults, they should be studied and understood for their effect on adults and then on children. In some large urban centers, political and economic considerations may necessitate family and group home child-care solutions. In other areas, larger units which serve shifting populations may be necessary. Both or neither may provide quality child-care, but they provide needed child-care, basic to the lifestyles of the people using their services.

One mid-western program administrator put it this way: 'We are less concerned about quality child-care than we are about any child-care. We'll get something in and then worry about how to change it.' This point of view is a recognition of part of the problem.--service provision. But providing services has to grow out of a recognition of the characteristics of the population that is to be served in terms of other use of child-care arrangements. It also has to be based on a realistic assessment of the political impact child-care arrangements are likely to have on neighborhood and city. Lastly, it has to be clearly provided for, socially and economically. One administrator told me that he had not been able to plan with the economic development person in his city even

though he was going to provide child-care to low-income women so that they could work. There were, he ruefully reported, no jobs for them once they were free to work, let alone any retraining programs. In simple terms, child-care is part of a whole system and part of the whole of a person's life: it changes and is changed by other units and individuals, and it then impacts on the child. Future research should reflect that concern--especially if policy is to be based on it.

Marginality

Child-care research in the United States should place in greater perspective the fact that child-care is still stigmatized. Despite the current interest in child-care and its relationship to women working in the larger society (cf. Kenniston 1977; see also Riley 1978; Glickman and Springer 1978) most adults still hold onto the idea that non-home or alternative arrangements are less than ideal--rather than desirable. In addition, staff recruited to work in child-care is paid less than comparable service jobs elsewhere despite the recognition--or allowance--that children need special care (cf. Joffe 1977.)

The research that needs to be done should focus on the following questions: What are the ways in which people with different kinds of professional certification operate as staff within any kind of child-care arrangement? What are the ways that staff is attracted to working in child-care? What are the types of interactions that go on with staff and parents of different class/race/educational backgrounds? What are the different kinds of interactions between appropriate agency personnel and child-care people, both formal and informal? How do parents and staff change their life-plans in light of their child-care experience? Each of these questions will be discussed in turn.

The question of certification of staff in the field of child-care is one emotionally and politically charged. Some of the emotional issues will be discussed below, in Symbolic Dimensions of child-care issues. Briefly, the debate concerns the extent to which child-care providers

should be required to have academic and other training. On the one hand, many child-care providers contend that a person who is "good with children" should be hired. These people, it is argued, can offer what the child needs most at early ages--love, attention, and caring.

The issue itself is clouded when it is not clear what other qualifications are necessary beyond being "good with children." One set of parents may want preschoolers to be aggressive, even at the expense of property (cf. Joffe's discussion on white parents 1977). Others may want aggressive behavior curbed (Comer and Poussaint 1976: 60-5.) The white parent may want someone who is "loose" and who will "flow and play" with the child; the black parent may want someone who is capable of setting limits. The additional qualifications for caregivers may be contradictory. These additional requirements may also be impossible to achieve with people lacking the educational background often demanded, especially if the relatively low pay scales are maintained and child-care work remains stigmatized. Furthermore, the child-care giver already working in this area is forced into a sensitive balancing act between different staff and parent expectations (cf. Joffe 1977.) A person considering child-care work who has the requisite skills may be discouraged from going on because of the built-in stress.

On the other side of the argument, some people demand professional certification for child-care givers, ranging from an AA degree, a cluster of classes in child-related courses, to a BA with a major in

child development. Trained people can give the child the kinds of cognitive development needed. They can also provide adequate role models for children (see Joffe 1977.) It is expected that people in this area are oriented to "being with children." It is less clear--and less certain--that they have the same personality skills and orientation that less educated caregivers "good with children" have. Without discussing the merits of any caregiver training program, it is debatable whether the "highest quality" person can be attracted to working with children. In competitive job markets, the non-competitive person may be drawn to "working with kids" and consequently offer contradictory role models for success. Further, elementary school teachers who, after being excessed, are reassigned to day-care, as in San Francisco, may be ill-equipped to working with preschoolers.

Staff conflicts over education, race, and value orientation in any formal, (i.e. official and funded,) or paid for program are great and they set an atmosphere for children in which to learn and/or develop (depending on your preference!). They are likely to be exacerbated as other goals, such as minority unemployment, are solved by using different approaches through the certification problem to hire in child-care. It would be useful to study the constituent elements that lead to staff resolution of conflict in diverse kinds of arrangements, as Joffe did for Berkeley, and as Powell begins (cf. 1976, 1977c.) If federal, state and local policies ignore the problems inherent in each type of structure, the child will suffer--and so will the parent and staff person who is using the arrangement to serve that

child as well as their own employment and/or growth purposes (depending on your preference!) What Joffe has clearly shown is that the parents and staff definitely use the arrangement for their own personal growth (cf. Powell 1977 A; 1977 B.) How systematic this is, and what kinds of general relationships between categories of people and use, must be left to future, comparative research. One cannot plan sensitively in child-care without recognizing diverse social use of a resource, and it is not simply enough to "put them up" and worry about things later.

Joffe found, for example, that selected blacks and whites learned to relate on a more personal basis, despite differences in class. Some parents went on to develop different kinds of career orientations after contact with a staff providing low-level counseling services. Berkeley was a relatively favorable place in which this could happen. But there may be other factors, ascertainable only by looking at these patterns elsewhere. Since it is the whole environment that affects the child, it is important to understand the consequences for parents of their use of and participation in any kind of child-care arrangement (cf. Shapiro 1977; Ade and Hoot 1976.) This will be particularly important as various programs use any kind of child-care arrangement for dissemination of information to parents and for investigation of child abuse, neglect, and deprivation (cf. Antler 1978; Brown 1976; Dugan 1975; Gil 1976; et al.) How that "acculturation process works is of concern to planners and agency personnel--as well as the staff and parents involved. In a democratic society, it is expected that people involved become amateur social scientists so they can self-consciously guide their own operations (cf. Breed

1971.) Resource personnel need this kind of data and insight to work with child-care groups more effectively.

In-house Research

One way in which formal child-care centers can deal with many of the issues noted above is to perform somewhat different in-house research from their usual program evaluation, such as PASS (Wolfenberger and Glenn 1974; see Zimilies 1977 on this point,) or understanding of cultural and social values (eg. Hollomon 1977 1-6.) Parents and staff can easily focus on transitioning by using the change times or experiences as a way of relating to children, playing with them, and integrating their results and activities in the life of the center. These adults must be alert to issues of the child's sensitivity on some points, but they should confront the child's feelings when appropriate.

Staff and parents can further analyze their own social system and operations with just a few cues from anthropologists and sociologists. There is, of course, a "political" question involved: some parents and staff may not want these issues brought to light. Joffe has clearly shown the tenuous position of staff around professionalism in Berkeley (1977); conversations with caretakers, and other research, suggests the same process elsewhere. Parents may feel similarly self-conscious about themselves, their role with children, and in the center. If parents and staff are committed to program improvement, they can choose to sensitize themselves to symbolic and structural issues as one way of effecting change. Further, groups of centers could use similar procedures to improve program as well as coordinate activities. Some centers might be willing to provide data to social researchers who are looking for systemic trends;

the end result would be to ensure comparability of ethnographically
orientated data on a national basis, something lacking now.

Symbolic Issues

The controversy over what constitutes appropriate, adequate, and quality child-care is multi-leveled. Children are the focus of the discussion--but not necessarily its object. Larger issues of politics and morality are part of the discussion--though they are rarely addressed by the participants in those terms. It is a debatable question whether anthropological or other kinds of research should address these latent issues because of two reasons: many participants are reluctant to see them surface if they do. Their concern is that room for change and maneuverability may be limited as a consequence.

What follows is necessarily a circumscribed discussion because confidentiality of informants must be recognized and because there is no general consensus that these issues should even be raised. Any researcher working in this area may be precipitating social change without any ability to help participants focus the consequences, an issue of some substantive ethical concern to the anthropological profession. It is hoped that the following discussion clarifies, rather than changes, organizational activities in this area.

It has been recognized in the past that full-time child-care has been stigmatized (see Joffe's review 1977: ch. 1.) Despite substantive changes in family structure and women working full-time (cf. Kenniston 1977,) and despite interest in child-care by women of all income levels (see Glickman and Springer 1978; Riley and Woodworth 1978,) surveys and popular sentiment still report that parents would prefer the child to be

raised within the nuclear family. The obvious social lag is still there.

Consequently, it presents certain problems. As in many other situations where value changes have not "caught up" with behavioral changes, different social groups may become politicized to prevent that realignment. They may choose to add other issues in terms of the most sensitive one. From interviews with a variety of child-care leaders and those opposed to child-care in most forms, the very existence of child-care programs are seen as an affront to many groups concerned with the decline of the American nuclear family. Many of these groups put together several issues in this context, including abortion, homosexuality, and divorce. When the specific child-care proposals call for employment of low-income people, the debate sharpens; subsidization of instability is predicted. When middle-class or single-parent households are provided for limited day-care or respite care, some see this as people "shirking their responsibilities." One fundamentalist minister in a fast-growing Southwestern town put it succinctly: 'Couples are falling apart. I try to help them maintain their family stability. It's not good when the woman has to go out to work and leave the kids somewhere.'

The fight is not simply a fight over different kinds of morality, for other issues are involved: If a federal voucher system is used, (suggested in the San Francisco hearings) to provide funding for parent-choice child-care, several possibilities become apparent. Vouchers may stimulate large franchised child-care centers, which already exist in some areas. Local regulations may not be enough to prevent this solution. Vouchers may also stimulate some inner-city employment by caregivers; they

may also release large numbers of people--both men and women--for work when there are no existing jobs for them and then there is no training, retraining, or referral service provided. They may aggravate fights between excessed and non-excessed teachers. They most certainly will be used by political brokers, both official and unofficial, in building up new coalitions.

Symbolic anthropology, coupled with good multi-level organizational analysis, can elicit these hidden agendas and long-term consequences. It would be decidedly unfair if only certain groups were studied, for they would be made vulnerable to political consequences and retaliation. Moreover, many groups not specifically concerned with child-care would not open themselves up to equivalent study even though their program and politics touched on this issue.

Appropriately fashioned research and analysis needs to be done so that policy discussions become more clearly based on underlying political and ideological realities. In this sense, because other sectors have chosen to make this a public policy issue, anthropologists may appropriately study the conflict; they are not violating private issues. Hopefully, by placing data in a conflict/resolution model they may provide disputants with more common grounds--unless the positions are so extreme that no meeting can take place--no research can or should be expected to bridge this gap.

Conclusion

The previous discussion has focused on several suggestions for future child-care research: 1) the multi-faceted cultural and social experience of the child; 2) the social system in which adults form child-care arrangements, both informal and formal; and 3) the political and economic influence on all types of child-care. The need for data in terms of policy has been outlined above, to ensure adequate and sensitive planning. Data will also enhance formal center effectiveness if parents and staff want that outcome (cf. Ade and Hoot 1976.)

Mental health workers in diverse fields should find their own work facilitated by this knowledge. Intervention is not simply helping the child or adult in crisis; it is an intrusion of the state and the community in personal and familial processes on the one hand and organizational operations on the other (cf. Antler 1978; Brown 1976; Levine and Graziano 1972.) It may have long-range consequences for the individual and the group not immediately anticipated or provided for, especially in follow-up. Given the secondary use of centers for counseling and support (cf. Joffe 1977,) as well as paraprofessional outreach to parents and children (cf. Gil 1976; Gladstone 1975; Guernsey 1969; Heinicke 1975; Shack 1975; Walder and Cohen 1976; et al,) this is an important consideration.

Qualitatively-based research on many levels will provide the best kind of data to make policy sensitive to systemic change for all participants. Child-care affects the whole life of the child, the adult who

is that child's legal custodian, and the people who provide care to that child. All participants in any child-care process have multiple dimensions to that involvement; policy should reflect that complexity and enhance it.

Footnotes

1. There are many books and articles about child-care outside the United States. Outside of traditional ethnographic descriptions, such as Mead and Wolfenstein (1954), there are other studies, such as Bettelheim's *Children of the Dream* (1969), Boocock (1977), Widmer (1975), Fells (1976), Moramarco (1975), Schirmer (1975), Meers and Marans (1968), Neubauer (1965), Spiro (1956), et al.

2. Dana Tracy, of the Coalition for Children and Youth, will be publishing a compendium on child-care research within the next year. The address for the Coalition is: 815 15th St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20005.

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